

A WELL-ORDERED LIFE

NO. 878

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, JUNE 27, 1869,
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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*“Order my steps in Your word, and let not any iniquity have dominion over me.”
Psalm 119:133.*

THIS is not the prayer of an unconverted man, or the cry of an awakened sinner foolishly expecting to find salvation in good works; it is the prayer of one who is saved, and who knows it. The verse preceding the text shows this, for he asks to be mercifully dealt with as the Lord is accustomed to do unto those who love His name. He therefore is confident that he is one of those—that he is a partaker of divine favor, and has the evidence of this in his love to the name of the Lord. Now, those persons who are truly saved are among the very loudest to cry out against anything like confidence in good works—you shall hear them denounce with all their hearts self-righteousness in every shape; you shall hear them preach up with might and main, the righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ as the *only* confidence upon which a soul may rest, and yet at the same time these people are, of all others in the world, the most zealous for good works, and the most earnest themselves to be holy, and in the fear of God to adorn the doctrine of God their Savior in all things. David was no professor of salvation by his own merits, he had been led by divine grace to trust in the sprinkling of the precious blood, and to glory in another righteousness than his own, and yet he is indefatigable in prayer, and in earnest endeavors to be purified from all faults of life, and to be made in practical holiness the faithful servant of God. The prayer before us is the sighing of a saved soul after a higher state of sanctification; it is the panting of a spirit already reconciled to God, to be more perfectly conformed unto the Lord’s mind and will.

Let us carefully note each word of the text. “*Order*,” says David, or as some read, “direct,” “set straight,” “appoint,” “firmly establish,” or “rightly frame my steps.” David, looking abroad upon nature, saw order ruling everywhere in heaven above, and on the earth beneath, and even among the fowl of the air, and the fish of the sea; he desired therefore, to fall into rank, and keep the harmony of the universe; he was not afraid of being laughed at for living by method and rule, for he saw method and rule to be divine Institutions; he did not aspire to a random life, or envy the free-livers, whose motto is, “Do whatever you like”; he had no lusts to be his own master; he wished in all things to be governed by the superior and all-perfect will of God. In the text, King David bows in homage to the King of kings, he enlists in the army of the Lord of hosts, and asks for marching orders, and grace to obey them.

Note the next word, “My steps.” He is anxious as to details. David does not say, “Order the whole of my pilgrimage.” He may mean that, but his expression is more expressive and painstaking; he would have each single *step* ordered in *holiness*; he would enjoy heavenly guidance in each minute portion of his journey towards heaven. Much of the beauty of holiness lies in little things. Microscopic holiness is the perfection of excellence—if a life will bear examination in each hour of it, it is indeed pure. Those who are not careful about their words, and even their thoughts, will soon grow careless concerning their more notable actions; those who tolerate sin in what they think to be little things, will soon indulge in it in greater matters; to live by the day, and to watch each step is the true pilgrimage method. More lies in the careful noting of every single act than careless minds can well imagine. Be this, then, your prayer—“Lord, direct my morning thoughts, that the step out of my chamber into the world may be taken in Your fear; at my table keep me in Your presence; behind my counter, or in my field, or wherever else I may be, do not allow me to grieve Your Spirit by any evil. And when I come to lie down at night, let the action (which seems so indifferent) of casting myself upon my pillow be performed with a heart that loves You, so that I shall be prepared to be with You, if wakeful during the night.” This brief prayer,

“Order my steps,” teaches us attention to the minutiae of life; may we have divine grace to learn the lesson.

“Order my steps *in Your word*.” Notice the expression—not *by* Your word, nor *according to* Your word; the sentence means that, but it means far more. The psalmist evidently looks upon the word of God as being the very path of his life, and he prays that he may walk within the lines which God’s word has marked out—may always keep within the sacred enclosures which the commands of God have made for the king’s highway. He does not pray, “Order my footsteps *by* Your word,” as though it were a law hanging up upon the column in the marketplace, to be read and studied, and then left hanging in its place, but *in* Your word, as though it were engraved in his heart, and then encompassed all his ways, thoughts and being. The word of God is the road of our marching, the sea of our sailing, the pasture of our feeding, and the home of our resting. Lord, never allow us to have a step out of it, nor a disorderly step in it.

“And let not any iniquity have dominion over me,” adds the psalmist. He frequently adds a negative petition to his positive prayers, as if to complete them. The second expression is weaker than the first, and is pitched upon a lower key, as if the suppliant would say, “If, O Lord, my steps cannot be so ordered in Your word as to be altogether without sin, yet let not any iniquity gain the mastery of my spirit. Even in the aberrations of my soul, let it still be in the main, true to You; if sin assails me, at least let it not enslave me; if for a while I stray, yet let me be reckoned as still Your own sheep, and not one of the flock of Satan. O my Lord, allow no iniquity to sit down on the throne of my heart, and make me its serf and vassal! If I slip into the mire, let it be but a slip, and do not allow me to wallow in it.”

Thus I have opened up the words one by one, and now, leaving out the last sentence, as we shall not have time to consider it this morning, I shall ask you to give me your earnest attention while we speak upon the solemnly practical topic of sanctification. First, we shall consider the *order* of a holy life; secondly, the *rule* of holiness by which that order is arranged, “Order my steps in Your word”; and thirdly, *the great Director* of that order, the Lord Himself. When we have spoken upon these points, we shall conclude with a few practical words, and may the Holy Spirit graciously bless them to us.

I. A holy life is no work of chance, it is a masterpiece of ORDER.

David prays that his steps may be ordered. Holiness rejoices in symmetry, harmony, proportion, order. If we consider at the outset the order of holiness to be that of *conformity* to the prescribed rule, we have that rule given us in living characters in the incarnate word. The law, not in the hand of Moses, but in the hand and life of the Redeemer, is the *rule of life* to a Christian. It behooves us that every single action of life should be, if judged by itself, and examined by the all-seeing God, an upright action—an action conformed into the perfect holiness of the Lord’s Christ. Alas, I fear there are many professors who do not hesitate to perform hundreds of actions without so much as once pausing to use the plumb-line of Christ’s example to see whether those actions are upright; but a tender conscience, a heart that has been really quickened by the Holy Spirit, will often pause, and after each distinct act will say, “O Lord, my God, I pray You forgive Your servant if my words have not been ordered according to Your will; help me now, in the next step that I am about to take, that I may proceed according to Your mind.” Every step a man takes in life, remember, is a step towards heaven or hell; we serve God or the devil in all that we do. No action of a man’s life is unimportant. The pilgrim either gains or loses by each step he takes. True, being in Christ, the believer shall not perish, but being a child of God, his naughtiness shall bring upon him certain and sharp chastisement; if he sins, he shall lose rest of spirit, and somewhat of the light of his Lord’s countenance. We can never afford to trifle with our actions, words, or thoughts! Even when we are alone, and do not seem to have any duty imperatively impressed upon us—standing as we do, even in solitude, in the full blaze of the divine Inspection, it is always incumbent upon us to the highest degree to watch the outgoings of our hearts, lest by any means, by evil imaginations, we vex the Spirit of God. Men become fools when they think with levity even of their most inconsiderable actions. Life is evermore a great solemnity, linked as it is to God, and to eternity. Take care that you so regard it, and never trifle with it as though it were a Vanity Fair. Many men seem to play at living, but he does best who lives earnestly and thoughtfully each single instant, and lifts up his heart to God that

every one of his separate thoughts, words, and deeds may bear the scales of the last judgment, and may be found in conformity with the righteousness of God. The first order, then, of a holy life, is the order of conformity to the Lord's will.

Another form of order after which we should strive, I shall, for the helping of our memories, call *the arithmetical*. Things are never in order when the second is *before* the first, or the fifth takes precedence of the second. Order in life consists very much in seeking *first* the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and seeking other things in due place. Order in a Christian life consists in putting the *soul* first, and the body second—in putting *eternal* treasure first, and worldly gain second, third, fourth, or far behind; in seeking first, the glory of God, and our own happiness only as a subsidiary aim. Oh, it is well with the Christian when he has learned his numbers well, and gives the first thing the first place, the second thing the second place, and the third thing the third place! Since many men make mistakes here, and put the major in the place of the minor, and the servant in the place of the master, let it be our daily prayer, "Lord, teach me this sacred arithmetic, and order my steps in Your fear."

Another form of order is what the mathematicians know as *geometrical*. There should be a *progress* in Christian life; it should not merely be first, second, and third, but there should be a continual advance, and if the advance is by a constant multiple, how greatly will a man increase! Why, take but the lowest number, two, and beginning with one, you come to two, four, eight, 16, 32, 64, 128, and so on, to I know not what greatness of number! He who did a little for Christ when but a babe in divine grace, should do more as a young man, and most of all as a father. He who, having but little faith, could bid the sycamore tree be plucked up, should when he has more faith, command the mountain to be removed, and cast into the sea! The youth who tore the lion in two, should when a man, strike a thousand Philistines, hip and thigh, or tear up the gates of Gaza, posts, and bar, and all! We are never to be satisfied with what we *have* done; if you are self-content, you shall soon be poor; if you shall once say, "I have attained," you shall drift down the current, but a holy *dissatisfaction*, a craving after holiness, an opening of the mouth, a panting after something better—this it is which will conserve what you have, as well as enrich you in things to which you have not yet attained! The right order for a Christian is the order of advance. "Superior," cries the eagle, as he mounts higher and higher, and leaves the clouds below him. Higher, higher, higher, believer! This is God's will concerning you, and do not be slack to benefit yourself of the consecrated privilege. "Order my steps in Your word, O Lord, by a constant geometrical progression, that I may grow in grace, and in the knowledge of my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ!"

There is another order which every Christian should observe, namely, *the proportional* order. There are certain duties which to the uninstructed, appear to conflict with each other. How far am I to observe the first table? How far the second? Sometimes my duty to God may cross the track of my duty to my parents, or to my employer; what course, then, will be right? How far shall I go in either road without sin, and where shall I stop without being guilty of omission one way or the other? All Christians should endeavor to balance their lives, that there shall not be an excess of one virtue, and a deficiency of another. Alas, we have known professors whose graces in one department have been so apparent as to become glaring, while the absence of graces in another has been lamentably manifest! Some will have courage till they are rude, and coarse, and intrusive; modesty will rule in others till they are cowardly and pliable. Not a few are so full of love that their talk is sickening with cant expressions, disgusting to honest minds, while others are so faithful that they see faults which do not exist! A third class are so tender that for the most glaring vice they make apologies, and sin goes unrebuked in their presence. The character of our Lord was such that no one virtue had undue preponderance. Take Peter, and there is a prominent feature peculiar to himself—one quality attracts you. Take John, and there is a lovely trait in his character which at once chains you, and his other graces are unobserved. But take the life of the blessed Jesus, and it shall perplex you to discover what virtue shines with purest radiance! His character is like the lovely countenance of a classic beauty in which every single feature is in so exact harmony with all the rest, that when you have gazed upon it, you are struck with a sense of general beauty, but you do not remark upon the flashing eyes, or chiseled nose, or the coral lips—an undivided impression of harmony remains upon your mind! Such a character should each of us strive after—a mingling of all

perfections to make up one perfection; a combining of all the sweet spices to make up a rare perfume, such as only God's Holy Spirit can make, but such as God accepts wherever He discovers it. May we have grace, then, to keep the virtues proportionate; and remember, this can only become ours by waiting upon God with daily prayer, crying evermore, "Order my steps in Your word."

Another form of order is that of *relation*. We stand not alone in this world; we are all the centers of circles and innumerable lines intersect each other in the region of our hearts. The believer should ask that his steps may be ordered in conformity to the relations which he bears to all things. Towards God, what is the order of my life? To walk humbly with my God is my daily duty; may God teach us this difficult virtue! Pride is inherent in us, and I suppose we shall never lay it aside till we undress for our last bed; but pride before God, on the part of a sinful creature, must be a very abhorrent thing, and our souls should daily agonize after true humility towards the Most High. The Lord, moreover, *deserves* our love, our gratitude, and in consequence, our gratitude, our zeal, our daily service, our reverent homage, our loving consecration of spirit, soul, and body to His cause. O that we did but live as in His sight, seeing Him who is invisible! We are God's creatures, God's children, God's servants, God's elect, members of Christ's body, Christ's spouse—then what manner of people ought we be? The Lord help us to live according to our relationship to Him.

Then we also bear a relationship to the Christian church, and there is a fitness of walk in reference to our fellow pilgrims; we are not to be censorious, and yet not blind to their faults; we are to be zealous, but not passionate; we are to be independent of man, but not disobedient to Christian rule and order. Alas, how many are unwilling to take their true place in the church, but desire to be first, and to be highly esteemed? To certain persons it is one of the hardest lessons to know how they ought to behave themselves in the house of God! Factious spirits cannot learn the lesson, and must set up small establishments of their own—on the principle that they had sooner rule in hell than serve in heaven! They cannot bring themselves to acknowledge discipline, or maintain order—from such may the Lord deliver us!

We must not forget our relationships to our families. He is a sorry Christian who would neglect to walk in his own household according to the duties required in the word of God. Are you a child? Christianity does not exempt you from honoring your parents! Are you a servant? The gospel of Jesus does not teach you to be an eye-server, to purloin, or to be pert, and disrespectful! Are you an employer? Your religion puts you under bonds to be the best of employers, for you yourself have a Master, even Christ. Are you a parent? Religion imposes upon you new duties to train up your children in God's fear. Are we neighbors? Let us bless all around us—bless and curse not; whoever our neighbor may be, we owe him, according to our Lord's law, no small consideration. I have no right to annoy my neighbor; I have no right to do anything which causes him loss or injury; on the contrary, I am bound to love him as myself, and if I can serve him in any way, to lay myself out to do so. Beloved, you have relationships towards *sinners*. These are of a very solemn kind; since Christ loved you, and died to save you, He has taught you to love others, and to be willing even to lay down your lives that they may be saved. Do you see how this subject opens up? It widens before our mind's eye into a boundless expanse! What a strange thing must holiness be, then, if the man who possesses it has to act in conformity to a thousand relationships! What an amazing piece of artistic adjustment! A painting by a master's hand! A work of art unparalleled! A music of intricate and ravishing harmonies! "An honest man," says the proverb, "is the noblest work of God." The phrase is correct, and a holy man has the truth of God. I dare to affirm that the balancing of the clouds, and the arranging of the firmament, the upheaval of the mountains, and the guidance of the stars—the creation of living bodies with all their wondrous tissue of muscle, and, sinew, and nerve—yes, and all other works of God put together do not exceed in splendor of wisdom and power, the *holiness* of a life which has been molded by the Spirit's sacred power! In holiness God is more clearly seen than in anything else, save in the person of Christ Jesus the Lord, of whose life such holiness is but a repetition. The relationships which encompass us on all hands cast a clear light upon David's meaning in the words, "Order my steps in Your word."

I have not quite finished this subject; I must call you to observe that there is an order of *period*—in the order of the celestial Almanac, punctuality is demanded, seasons must be kept, due time must be regarded. Now the Christian can only be said to have his life ordered rightly as to *time* when all his time is sanctified to noblest ends. Perpetuity of uprightness is the very beauty of holiness. No man's life is well ordered, if by fits and starts he is careful, and again is careless as to how he acts. Holiness consists not in the rushing of intense resolve, which like Kishon sweeps everything before it, and then subsides, but in the constant flow of Siloah's still waters, which perpetually make glad the city of our God. Holiness is no blazing comet, amazing nations with a transient glory; it is a *fixed* star that with still radiance shines on through the darkness of a corrupt age. Holiness is persevering obedience—it is not holiness at all if it is but occasional zeal and sensational piety.

Moreover, holiness as to its order in the matter of time is seasonable. It is the fault of numbers that their virtues are always too late—they are patient when the pain is over, generous when the opportunity for generosity has passed away; they are forgiving after they have vented their anger in unkind words; they are sorrowful after they have done the ill, and therefore evidently right at heart; but if they could have abstained from the ill, how much better! The tree that God commends brings forth its fruit in its season. Would God we all had this ordering of our footsteps that we could bring forth the appropriate virtue in its time. O if I could have back those opportunities of pleading with sinners which I have allowed to slip, how would I hope to use them! Could I have back those times for glorifying my precious Master which have now, alas, rolled away with the years beyond the flood—how would I seek to honor His dear name! But the fruit in its season did not come, alas, alas, for me! My God, help me in the future, that when the time arrives, the man may be ready for the time by Your Spirit.

Once more on this point, there should be about the Christian's holiness an order of *suitability*, by which I intend this—what would be right enough, and as much as would be expected in an ordinary man, is not the measure of a Christian's service to his God. "What do you do more than others?" is a very pertinent question to every professor of the faith of Christ. To be *barely* honest, to be *barely* just—what is this? There are thousands of Atheists who are all this! To be observant of the Sabbath, to be careful in the maintenance of regular family devotion, what is this? Many a hypocrite has done this year after year for a lifetime! There is a peculiar tenderness of walk, an elevation of spirit, an unworldliness of mind which is expected from the Christian—not as a man, but as a man *twice born*, as a favorite of heaven, as one whose way is Christ, whose end is Christ—and who, therefore, cannot be allowed and tolerated in conduct such as might be expected from an unconverted man. O Christian, you are a priest! Take care how you serve your God, at whose altar you stand! Let not merely the bells of your profession sound musically, but let the pomegranates of your holiness be your beauty. O heir of heaven, you are a *king*—play not with beggars! Grasp your scepter, and rule over your lusts! Be of princely character, as you are of princely blood. You are a citizen of heaven! Let your conversation be on high. You shall soon sit to judge angels! A place at the right hand of the great Judge in the last assize is reserved for you! As your honors, as your pedigree, as your estate, as your favors are, so let your life be, and let your steps be ordered according to the dignity of your condition.

We have spent too long a time, but the subject tempted us. There are vast battalions of thought in ambush in the text.

II. Very briefly, in the second place, we will note THE RULE of this order.

"Order my steps *in Your word*," not "Order my steps according to my wishes." This would be mere self-will. Many men order their steps according to the principle of worldly profit and loss—that is good that pays—that is sure to be avoided which costs too much! This is meanness and greed; the true follower of Jesus does not ask to have his steps ordered according to the rule of pleasure, as those do who always choose the easiest road, whether it leads down to hell or up to heaven. This is childish folly. The good man is anxious to be conformed to God's word, let the road be rough or smooth; he does not ask to be conformed to precedent, as the multitude do who will not attempt what has never been done before—they must always tread where they can see the marks of traffic, *custom* is their law. Not so David. If he is the first to tread the path, he is well content if it is God's way! It is folly to be singular

except when to be singular is to be right! Then singularity, and even eccentricity, become the highest wisdom; better go to heaven alone than to hell with a herd! The saint does not request to be conformed to tradition, he little cares for that—no, less than nothing! What matters it if one is damned according to old rubrics? Better by half to be saved according to the way which men call heresy. No, no! The saint cares not for the dogmas of priests or the traditions of the elders, but, “Order my steps *in Your word*” is his prayer.

Some, I know, fall into a very vicious habit, which habit they excuse themselves, namely, that of ordering their footsteps according to *impressions*. Every now and then I meet with people whom I think to be rather weak in the head who will journey from place to place, and will perform follies by the gross under the belief that they are doing the will of God because some silly whim of their diseased brains is imagined to be an Inspiration from above; there are occasionally impressions of the Holy Spirit which guide men where no other guidance could have answered the end. I do not doubt the old story of the Quaker who was disturbed at night, and could not sleep, and was led to go to a person’s house miles away and knock at the door just at the time when the inhabitant was about to commit suicide—just in time to prevent the act. I have been the subject of such impressions myself, and have seen very singular results. But to *live* by impressions is oftentimes to live the life of a fool, and even to fall into downright rebellion against the revealed word of God! Not your impressions, but that which is in this Bible must always guide you! “To the law and to the testimony.” If it is not according to this word, the impression comes not from God—it may proceed from Satan, or from your own distempered brain! Our prayer must be, “Order my steps in Your word.” Now, that rule of life, the written word of God, we ought to study and obey. The text proves that the psalmist desired to know what was in God’s word—he would be a reader and a searcher. O Christian, how can you know what God would have you to do if your Bible is unthumbed and covered over with dust? The prayer implies too, that when David once knew God’s word, he wished to fulfill it all. Some are pickers and choosers. One of God’s commands they will obey—another they are conveniently blind to—even directly *disobedient* to it! O that it would not be so with God’s people, that they had a balanced mind in their obedience, and would take God’s word without making exceptions, following the Lamb where ever He goes! “Order my steps, Lord, not in a *part* of Your word, but in *all* of it; let me not omit any known duty, nor plunge into any known sin.” There was in David’s mind, according to this prayer, a real love for holiness; he was not holy because he felt he ought to be, and yet would gladly be otherwise; if there were anything good and lovely, he desired to have it; if there were anywhere in God’s garden a rare fruit or flower of purity and excellence, he longed to have it transplanted into his soul, that in all things his life might be the perfect transcript of the word of God! Stick, then, to God’s word. There is a perfect rule in the divine Statutes. May the Holy Spirit cast us in the mold of His word.

III. Thirdly, two or three words upon the DIRECTOR whom David had chosen.

He applies to God Himself to order his steps. Much will depend upon the model that a man takes, and the captain under whom a man serves. We read in the papers last week of a commanding officer at Aldershot who was obeyed by his soldiers with that prompt discipline which is peculiar to the British soldier. But through some mistake or mismanagement, he managed to dash together two parties of dragoons so that one or two were injured, and one man was killed outright. It is a glorious thing for us that we have a Commander who never makes such mistakes—who will so order our footsteps that our virtues shall not come into collision, and so direct our lives that it shall be always safe for us to follow His Commands.

What does David mean by putting himself under the orders of God? He means this. First, “Lord, give me a heart to love You; I beseech You, change me so that whereas I once tended towards evil by the force of nature, I may now tend towards righteousness by a yet more powerful force—the force of a *new* nature. Order my footsteps, put a propelling power within my spirit that shall compel my steps towards the right, and the true, and the holy.”

He means next, “Lord, illuminate me to know Your word; pour a flood of Your light into my spirit that I may never mistake good for evil, never choose light for darkness. O light up the darkest recesses

of my soul, that I may always discern at the very first look that which is contrary to Your mind, even when it comes in the most flattering disguise!”

He means again, “Let Your Holy Spirit overshadow me; let my spirit not only follow, but let Your Spirit lead the way. Let Your Spirit subdue all my faculties, understanding, affections, and will. Let everything be subordinated to a divine government that so being, no longer independent of You, I may be holy as You are holy.”

He seems to mean again, “Charm me with the beauties of holiness; let me so see the example of Your dear Son, that I may be fascinated by it, and compelled to do as He did by the divine order and behest of His example.”

And does not he also mean, “Lord, so arrange providence that I may not be tempted above what I am able to bear; check me when I am likely to sin; send me help just when I shall need it to achieve some difficult task of obedience”? Providence works with divine grace. There is the hand of a man, and the wing of an angel going together, and where God sets the soul to work after sanctification, He is quite sure to order both its outward joys and sorrows so that its holiness shall be promoted. Lord, do this, and thus order my steps in Your word.

I have concluded when I have given two or three words of earnest practical advice. My brothers and sisters, especially you who are members of this church, is it necessary that I earnestly commend to you to seek after conformity to the Lord’s word as laid down in His revealed will? Should there be any such necessity, I beseech you hear me patiently but for a minute. You all desire to extend the power of the gospel and the glory of Christ’s kingdom—know then, that you can by no possibility do anything which shall be more likely to accomplish this than by seeking after holiness! A holy church is always a *powerful* church; a band of people without gifts, without wealth—but who exhibit much of the likeness of Christ—is a power in the land! Covet not talent, but covet divine grace! Pant not so much after honor, as after holiness! This is the great point with you, if you are to win the battle for Christ, and put the crown upon His head. O give me but to know that you are godly parents, that you are obedient children, that you are pious employers, that you are diligent employee, and my crown of rejoicing will be bright indeed! But if your lips are unhallowed, your testimony goes for nothing, and my crown is gone. I pray you, by the glory of Him who wore the crown of thorns for you, by all His love, and His compassion and by the love which you bear Him in return, “watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation,” and commit your ways unto God, that they may be directed in His fear.

Brothers and sisters, I commend holiness to you, because above all things in this world it is one of the most comforting in the hour of trouble. Let a soul be brought low, and let there be sin connected with its humiliation, and there is a thorn in its pillow. But when a man knows that in the sight of God he has been kept from evil, and his integrity cannot be impugned, then quiet reigns in his soul. There may be roaring tempests without, but his soul is at peace when he can say, “You have upheld me in my integrity, and You have set me before Your face forever.” Remember that the best way to enjoy fellowship is holiness. Many saints of God do not see Christ’s face by the month together because they are careless in their living. “How shall two walk together except they are agreed?” The Lord will not cast off His people, but at the same time He will not manifest to them the tenderness of His love unless they walk very carefully with Him. Much will be endured by a king from a common subject which could not be borne with from a courtier. You are of the King’s counsel; you are a favorite of the Lord; see that you walk circumspectly. The place where God is, according to Jacob, is a dreadful place, and so it is because there is a holiness required in the presence of the Most High which should make us take off our shoes in holy dread. We have been for a long time sighing and crying because we do not see a revival of religion. It is the common talk with earnest souls that the times are stale; they are not as bad as they were, yet there is no advance in the kingdom such as we hoped for, but remember, if we want to see the Master come in the power and fullness of His Spirit, one of the surest ways to get Him is to be more holy. His church hinders the blessing by her inconsistency. A *worldly* church chases away the Spirit of God. Wherever there is a people conformed to the maxims and ways of the world—indifferent in prayer, and sluggish in effort, there will be the name to live, but there will be death. But where there is a people who

with little strength, have, nevertheless, kept God's word, and above all have kept their garments unspotted, there will before long, come the making bare of the almighty arm in the eyes of all the people! Wash, make yourselves clean; put away your secret iniquities; humble yourselves, O professors, before God! May the Lord give you the spirit of repentance! May He pour out His Spirit upon each of us! May we put away the old leaven, and so shall we keep the feast; may we shake ourselves from the dust of every sin—so shall we put on our beautiful garments, and the time of the church's glory and our triumph shall come! My lips refuse to speak, as I wish they would, upon a theme which weighs upon my spirit right heavily. O God, send us holiness! If by no other means, then let trouble come to work in us hatred of sin! If You will not answer otherwise, then answer by terrible things in righteousness! O God, make us holy for Your honor's sake!

Lastly, I fear that mingled in this throng are some who never prayed the prayer, "Order my steps in Your word," for their steps are certainly not ordered in God's word. Some of you have uncertain steps—you are hovering between two opinions, you cannot make up your minds. O fools, and slow of heart! You cannot make up your minds? Which is better, God or the devil, holiness or sin, heaven or hell? It seems to be a point where no delays or considerations should be necessary! O that you were taught wisdom by the Holy Spirit, and would hesitate no longer, but decide this day! As the Lord my God lives, you have but a short time to live, and if you continue hesitating, as some of you have done these 40 or 60 years, the sermons you have heard, and the pricks of your conscience shall be swift witnesses against you to condemn you!

There are others whose steps were never ordered in God's word, for their ways are hypocritical. They walk today like Christians, tomorrow as worldlings; they sing the songs of Zion, and they chant the hymns of Baal; they worship the Lord with His people, but they worship Bacchus, also, with his votaries. Alas for the many who wear a mask and a disguise, and make fair pretenses, and a glittering show, but the truth of God is not in them! I fear there are some of you whose steps are not ordered by God, for your ways are sin. Pleasure enchants you! Alas this fleeting pleasure—whose cup glitters with bubbles, but whose dregs are hell! Would God you would cease from your evil ways, and turn at His rebuke, for then He has promised He will have mercy upon you! Among us, this morning, are many whose outward conduct is unblemished, and whose morals are excellent, but yet their heart is not right with God. They live without prayer day after day; they have an atheistic heart which shuns the Deity. I put this prayer before you, not that you may use it, but that you may judge yourselves by it. And if this one prayer condemns you, how will you bear the Majesty of the Judge of all the earth who shall come in person to judge the world in righteousness according to our gospel? Jesus has died for sinners; He came to save the ungodly. Trust Him! Trust Him! Trust Him, and from this day you shall begin to live! O may the Spirit of God help you to trust Him, and then, but not till then, shall you be in a fit state to breathe this prayer for sanctification to God of perfect holiness, "Order my steps in Your word."

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—PSALM 119:129-152.

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